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Castañeda et al.

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- [54] **DISPLAY ASSEMBLY HAVING LCD AND SEAL CAPTURED BETWEEN INTERLOCKING LENS COVER AND LIGHTPIPE**
- [75] Inventors: **Julio C. Castañeda; Thomas A. Goodwin**, both of Coral Springs; **Benjamin J. Hafen**, Sunrise; **Gregory A. Brookes**, Plantation, all of Fla.
- [73] Assignee: **Motorola, Inc.**, Schaumburg, Ill.
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- [51] **Int. Cl.**⁶ **G02F 1/1333; G02F 1/1335; H05K 5/00**
- [52] **U.S. Cl.** **349/58; 349/65; 361/681; 361/679**
- [58] **Field of Search** **349/58, 60, 65; 361/679, 681, 814; 345/87; 200/343**
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Primary Examiner—William L. Sikes
Assistant Examiner—Tarifur R. Chowdhury
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Andrew S. Fuller

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A display module (100) includes a light pipe (140), a liquid crystal display (LCD) module (130), a lens cover (110), and a gasket (120), which are mated together to form a sealed assembly. The LCD module (130) and gasket (120) are captured between the lens cover (110) and light pipe (140), such that the gasket (120) provides a seal between the lens cover (110) and the LCD module (130). Preferably, the gasket (120) has at least one integrally formed button (122) that protrudes through a buttonhole (112) on the lens cover (110) to provide for external actuation of a switch (152) within the display module assembly (100).

10 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets

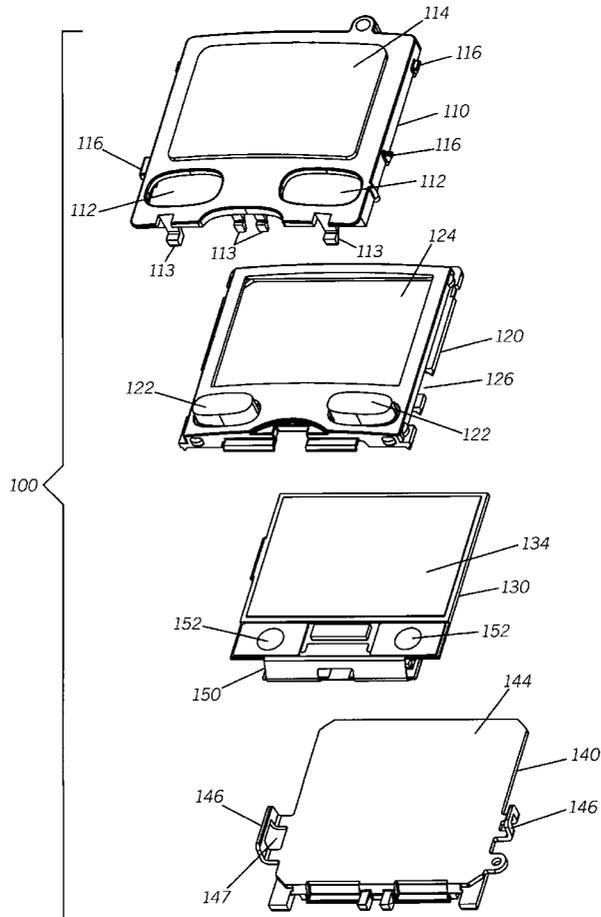


FIG. 1

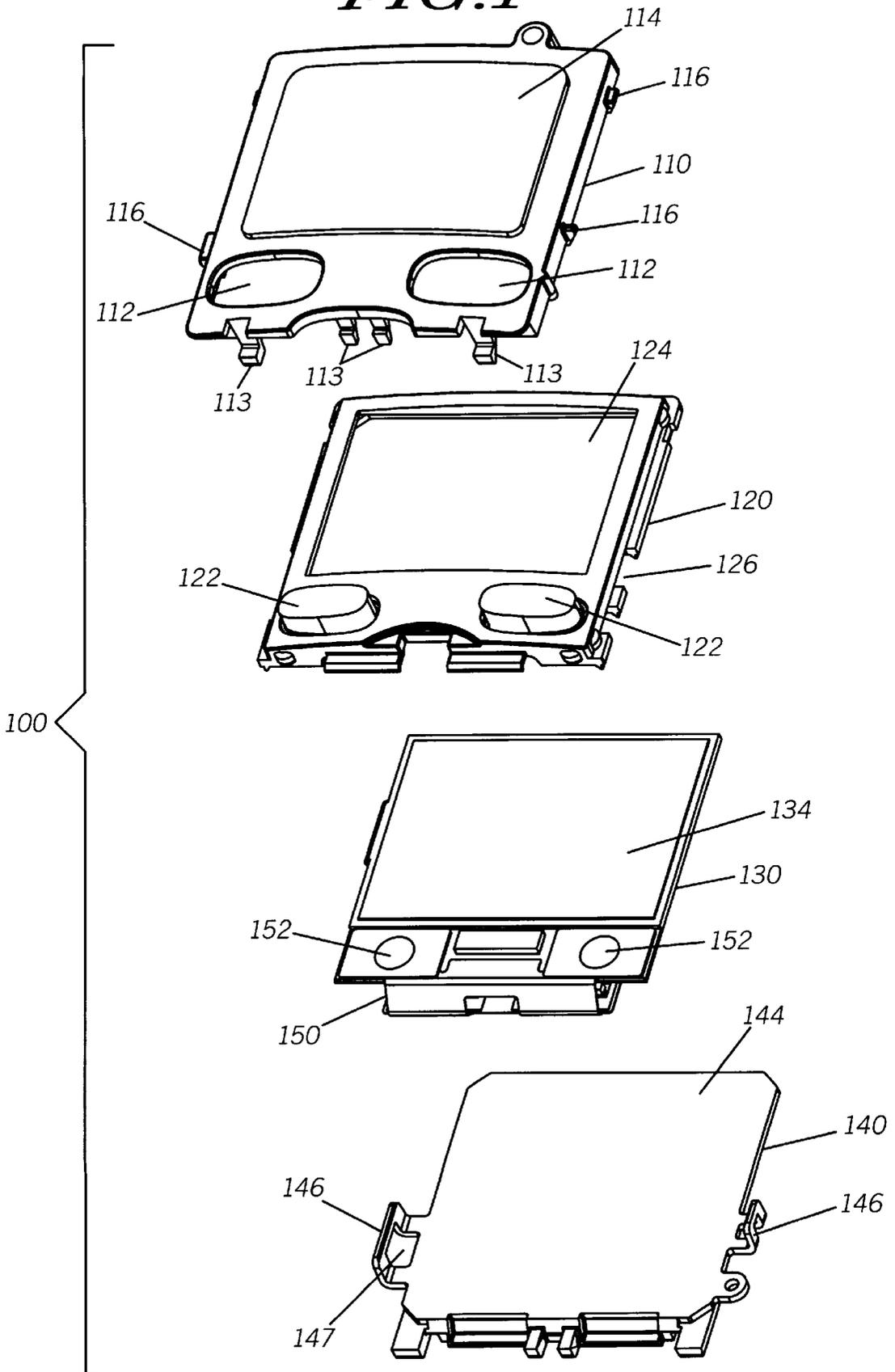


FIG. 2

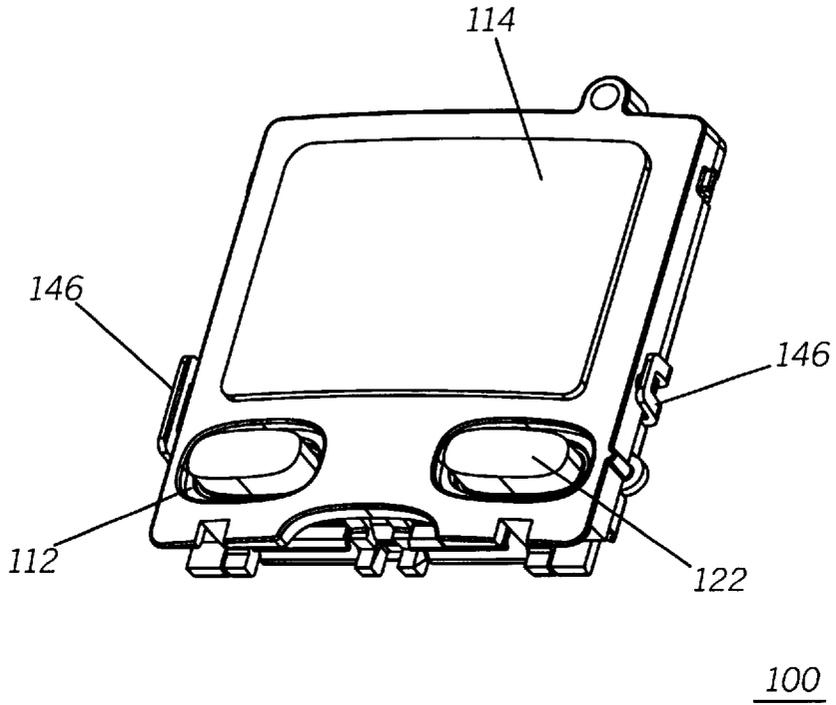


FIG. 3

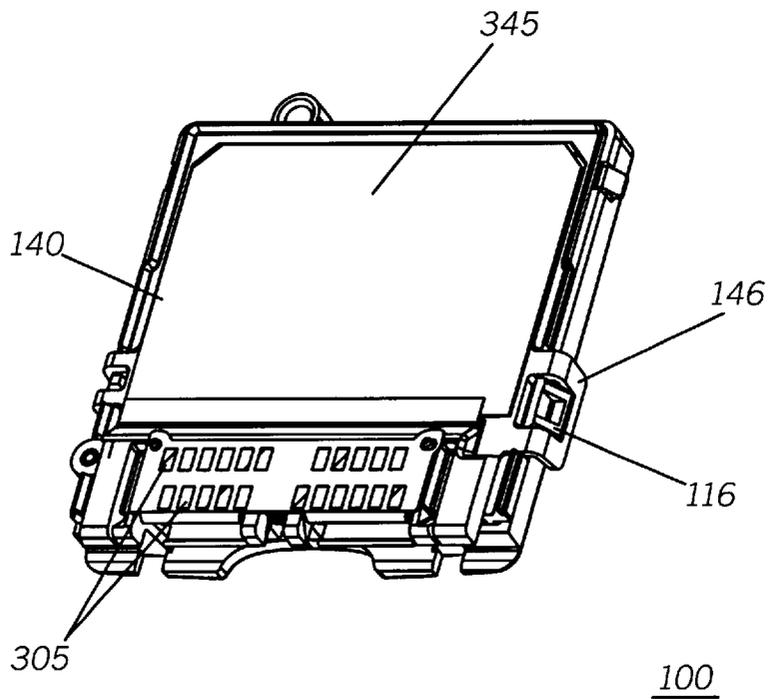


FIG. 4

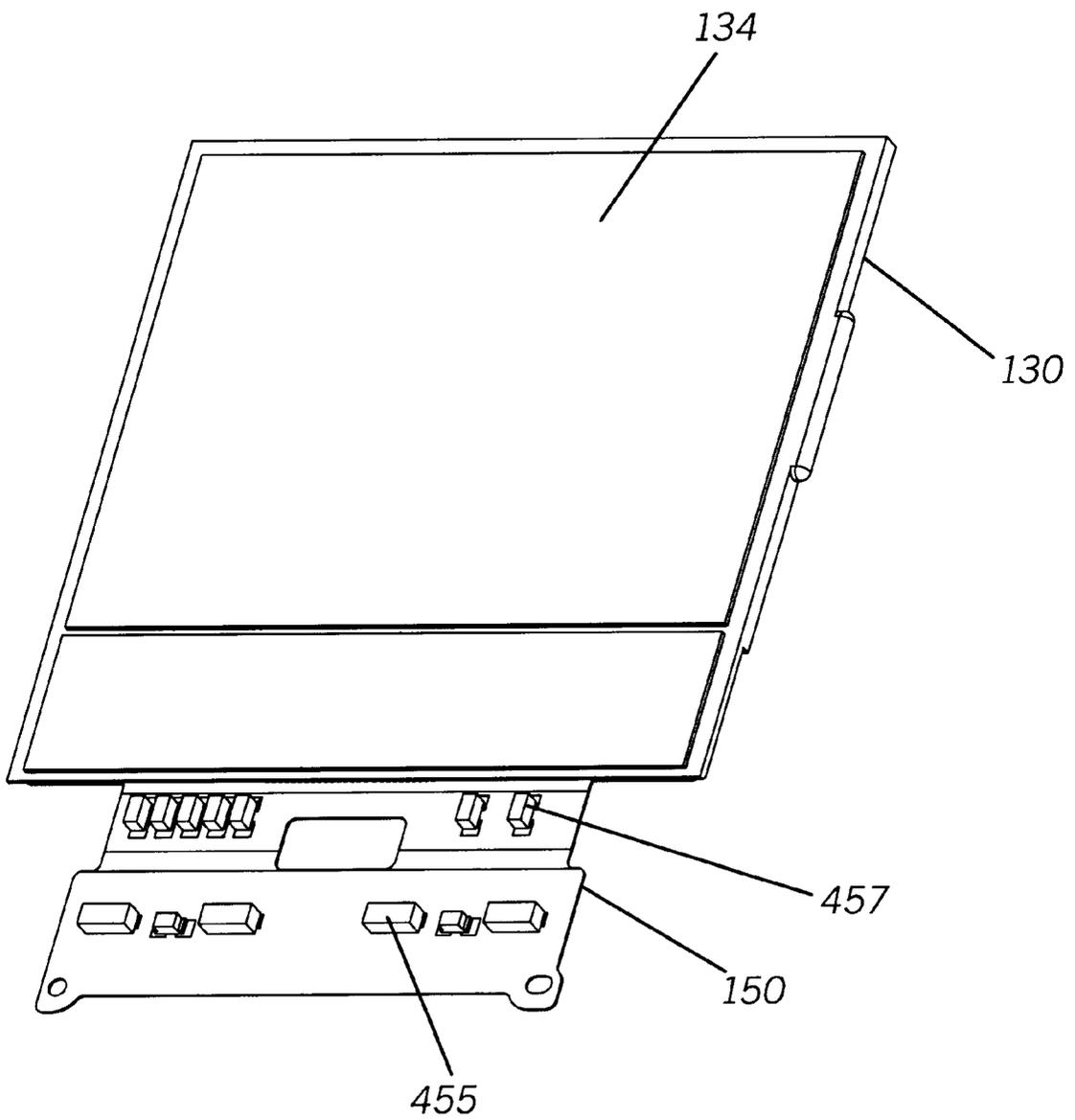
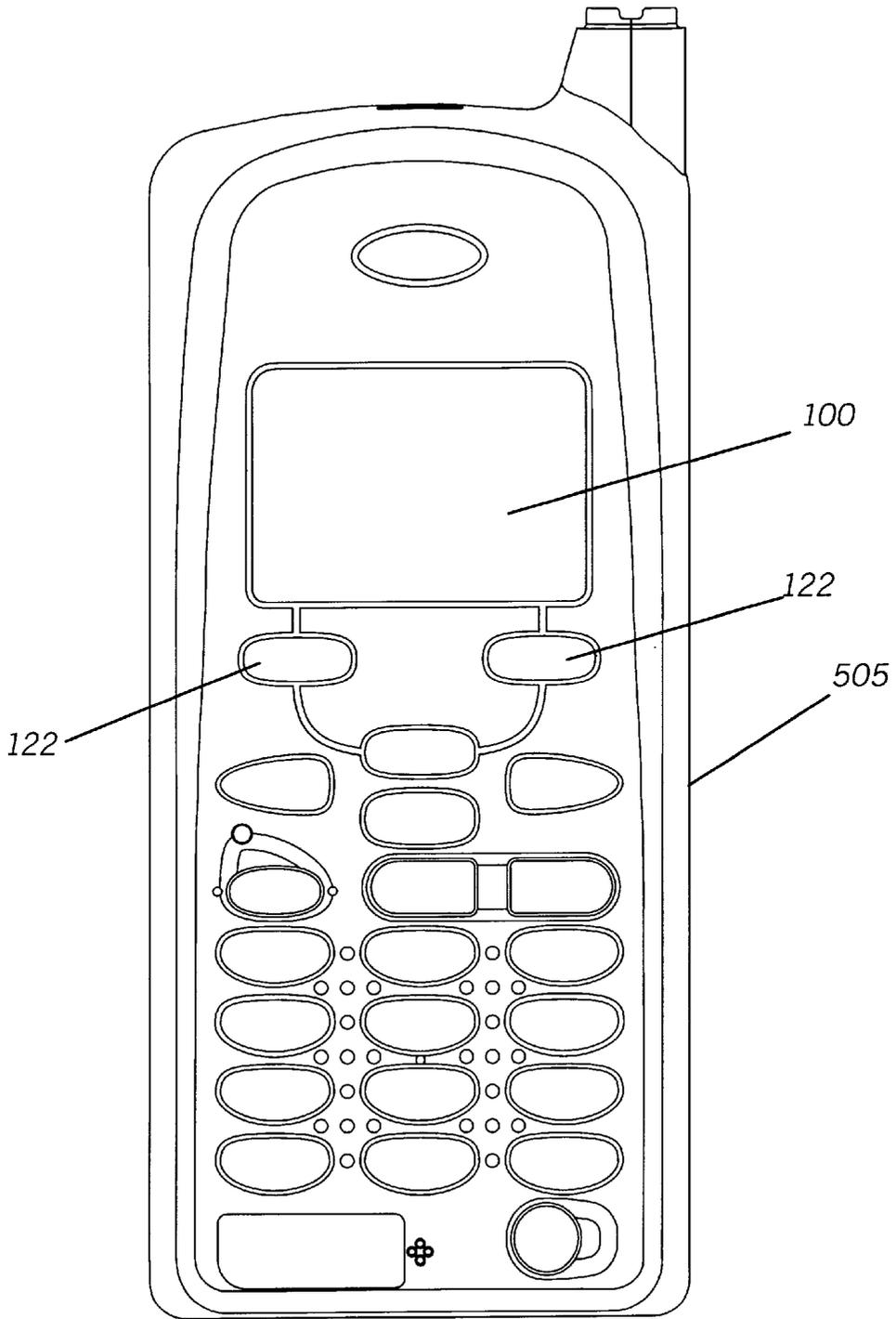


FIG. 5



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DISPLAY ASSEMBLY HAVING LCD AND SEAL CAPTURED BETWEEN INTERLOCKING LENS COVER AND LIGHTPIPE

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates in general to display modules for electronic devices, and more particularly, to display module assemblies.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Liquid crystal display (LCD) modules are often used in electronic devices for user interface purposes. A typical LCD module comprises liquid crystal material, suspended between layers of glass or other transparent medium, thin film circuitry overlaying the glass for energizing purposes, and an interface for driving the LCD module. Such LCD modules are ordinarily fragile, and much caution must be exercised when handling them in a manufacturing environment. In the manufacture of an electronic device, an LCD module is often assembled to a printed circuit board or other structural element, together with additional components to facilitate its use. In order to minimize problems, due to breakage, or due to the introduction of defects, LCD modules are usually introduced toward the end of the assembly process.

It is desirable to have a display subassembly in which an LCD module is combined with other display components to facilitate testing and handling in a manufacturing environment. Preferably, such subassembly should be of simple construction, robust, functionally testable, and not susceptible to the introduction of defects from normal handling. Prior art display subassemblies do not adequately meet the needs of simplicity, functional completeness, and robustness. Therefore, a new display assembly is needed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an exploded view of a display module assembly, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the display module assembly showing the front section, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the display module assembly showing the rear section, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a liquid crystal display module having a flexible circuit substrate connector attached thereto, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a front view of a radio incorporating the display module assembly, in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

While the specification concludes with claims defining the features of the invention that are regarded as novel, it is believed that the invention will be better understood from a consideration of the following description in conjunction with the drawing figures, in which like reference numerals are carried forward.

Generally, the present invention provides for a self-contained display module assembly for incorporation into an electronic device. The display module assembly includes a light pipe, a liquid crystal display (LCD) module, a lens cover, and a gasket, mated together in a snap-fit arrange-

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ment. The LCD module and gasket are captured between the lens cover and light pipe, such that the gasket provides a seal between the lens cover and the LCD module. Preferably, the gasket has at least one integrally formed button that protrudes through a buttonhole on the lens cover to provide for external actuation of a switch within the display module assembly.

FIG. 1 shows an exploded view of a display module assembly **100**, in accordance with the present invention. FIGS. 2 and 3 show front and rear views of the display module assembly **100**, respectively. FIG. 4 shows a light pipe and flex assembly used in the display module assembly **100**. Referring to FIGS. 1, 2, 3 and 4, the display module assembly **100** includes a lens cover **110**, a gasket **120**, an LCD module **130**, and a light pipe **140**, which are fitted together in a self-contained functional assembly.

The LCD module **130** is an assembly comprising liquid crystal material disposed between glass layers that have an overlay of thin film circuitry (not shown) to energize the liquid crystal material for character generation display along a display surface **134**. Such construction is typical in the art. A flexible substrate **150** is mechanically attached and electrically connected to the LCD module **130**. The flexible circuit substrate **150** carries popple switches **152**, light emitting diodes **455**, driver circuitry **457** for the LCD module **130**, and a set of contacts **305** that provide an electrical interface to the display module assembly **100**. The popple switches **152** are positioned below the display area **134** on the LCD module **130**, and the light emitting diodes **455** are positioned to function as a light source for illuminating the display area **134**.

The light pipe **140** is formed from a clear, transparent material, and has a flat, rectangular shape with front and back opposing surfaces **144**, **345**. The back surface **345** is coated with white or light colored material to form a reflective surface. The light pipe **140** further includes retainer elements or snaps **146** projecting from the sides. Each snap **146** has a slot **147** that functions as a catch for mating with a corresponding retainer element. The light pipe **140** is capable of transmitting light generated by the light source **455** in a direction perpendicular to its front surface, and is also capable of reflecting ambient light directed at its front surface. The flexible circuit substrate **150** is also attached, or otherwise positioned with respect to the light pipe **140**, such that the light emitting diodes **455** are seated within recesses (not shown) formed in the light pipe **140**.

The gasket **120** is a combination seal and key pad. The gasket **120** has an opening **124** that permits viewing of the display area **134** of the LCD module **130**. The gasket further includes buttons **122** that are aligned with the popple switches **152**. Slots **126** on the sides of the gasket **120** provide a pass through for the snaps **146** on the light pipe. The gasket **120**, including the buttons **122**, is formed from resilient material in a single-piece construction. When a button **122** is depressed, it engages and actuates a corresponding popple switch **152**. The resilience of the gasket material provides a return bias force, such that release of the button causes deactuation of the switch.

The lens cover **110** is preferably formed from rigid material, and has a clear, transparent portion **114** that forms a lens for viewing the display surface **134**. Retainer elements in the form of hooks **116** provide a catch for the slotted snaps **146**. Buttonholes **112** formed within the lens cover **110** are aligned to accommodate the buttons **122**. Snap hooks **113** integrally formed on the lens cover **110** provide for snap insertion of the display module assembly **100** into a support structure of an electronic device.

When fully assembled, the flexible circuit substrate **150** is attached and electrically connected to the LCD module **130**, and the popple switches **152** located on a portion of the LCD module **130** away from the display area **134**. The flexible circuit substrate **150** is further wrapped around the light pipe **140** such the light emitting diodes **455** are seated in recesses within light pipe **140**, and such that the set of contacts **305** on the flexible circuit substrate **150** are externally exposed and buttressed by the light pipe **140**. Further, the popple switches **152** carried by the circuit substrate **150** are positioned for actuation by the buttons **122**. The LCD module **130** is mounted on the light pipe **140**, and the gasket **120** overlaid onto the LCD module **130**. The lens cover **110** is mounted over the gasket **120** and snapped onto the light pipe **140**, such that the complementary retainer elements on the light pipe **140** and lens cover **110** are engaged, and the buttons **122** protrude through the buttonholes **112**. Accordingly, the LCD module **130** and gasket **120** are captured between the lens cover **110** and light pipe **140**. So configured, the light pipe **140**, LCD module **130**, gasket **120**, and lens cover **110** are fitted together in a self-contained functional module, such that the gasket **120** provides a seal between the lens cover **110** and the LCD module **130**.

FIG. 5 is a front view of an electronic device **500**, such as a portable two-way radio telephone, that incorporates the display module assembly **100**, in accordance with the present invention. The two-way radio **500** includes a radio housing **505** that houses communication circuitry for communicating over radio frequency channels, in a manner well known in the art. The display module assembly **100** is snap-fitted unto a printed circuit board or other structural support (not shown) within the radio housing **505**, and connected to its internal circuitry. The integral key pad buttons **122** of the display module assembly **100** are externally exposed.

The present invention provides for significant benefits over the prior art. The display module, including LCD module, light pipe, and lens cover is assembled in a manner that protects the LCD module from damage due to mishandling. By providing for complementary retainer elements on the light pipe and on the lens cover, and by incorporating actuator buttons on a gasket that also provides a seal for the LCD module, a compact, yet highly functional display module is provided, that is robust and easily transportable. Moreover, the display module can be assembled in a clean room environment and made available as a sealed assembly component that is not susceptible to the intrusion of dust or other contaminants.

While the preferred embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be clear that the invention is not so limited. Numerous modifications, changes, variations, substitutions and equivalents will occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A display module, comprising:

a light pipe;

a liquid crystal display mounted on the light pipe;

a gasket overlaying the liquid crystal display, the gasket having an integrated button protruding therefrom, the button and gasket having a single-piece construction; and

a lens cover having a transparent portion and a buttonhole corresponding to the button on the gasket, the lens cover being positioned over the gasket such that the button protrudes through the buttonhole;

wherein the light pipe, liquid crystal display, gasket, and lens cover are fitted together in a self-contained functional assembly.

2. The display module of claim 1, wherein the light pipe and lens cover have complementary retainer elements that are engaged such that the liquid crystal display and gasket are captured therebetween.

3. The display module of claim 2, wherein the retainer elements comprise a snap integrally formed on the light pipe and protruding therefrom, and a snap retainer integrally formed on the lens cover.

4. The display module of claim 1, further comprising:

a flexible circuit substrate interconnecting the liquid crystal display and the light pipe;

a light emitting diode carried by the flexible circuit substrate and positioned beside the light pipe; and

a popple switch carried by the flexible circuit substrate and positioned for actuation by the button.

5. A display module, comprising:

a light pipe having first and second surfaces that oppose each other;

a liquid crystal display module mounted on the light pipe alongside the first surface;

a gasket overlaying the liquid crystal display module, the gasket having an integrated button protruding therefrom, the button and gasket having a single-piece construction;

a circuit substrate electrically interconnected to the liquid crystal display module, and comprising:

a light emitting diode positioned beside the light pipe;

a set of contacts positioned along the second surface of the light pipe;

a popple switch aligned with the button; and

a lens cover having a transparent portion and a buttonhole corresponding to the button on the gasket, the lens cover being positioned over the gasket such that the button protrudes through the buttonhole;

wherein the light pipe and lens cover have complementary retainer elements that are engaged to secure the light pipe and lens cover together, and to capture the gasket and the liquid crystal display module, therebetween.

6. An electronic device having a self-contained display module, the display module comprising a light pipe, a liquid crystal display, a lens cover, and a gasket, wherein the light pipe and lens cover are mated together in a snap fit arrangement that captures the liquid crystal display and the gasket, such that the gasket provides a seal therebetween, wherein the lens cover has a buttonhole, and the gasket has an integrally formed button that protrudes through the buttonhole.

7. The electronic device of claim 6, further comprising:

a flexible substrate electrically interconnected to the liquid crystal display module, and carrying circuitry comprising:

a light source positioned beside the light pipe;

a set of contacts buttressed by the light pipe; and

a switch aligned with the button.

8. The electronic device of claim 7, wherein the lens cover has snap hooks protruding therefrom for securing the display module to a support structure.

9. The electronic device of claim 8, wherein the light pipe has a catch portion extending therefrom and the lens cover has a hook portion that engages the catch portion to secure the lens cover and light pipe together.

10. The electronic device of claim 9, wherein the light pipe has a back surface and a reflective backer disposed along the back surface.